

## HISTORICAL GENEALOGY OF THE WOODSONS AND THEIR CONNECTIONS

Roman numerals before the names of children indicate the order of birth.  
Asterisks (\*) are inserted before the names of all children who, in turn, had issue.  
Superior figures following the names (Mary,<sup>1</sup> etc.) indicate the generations to which the persons belong, counting from Dr. John Woodson.  
Heavy and light face numbers in arabic figures (265 and 612) are the index numbers.

- Issue of I \* 1 Dr. JOHN WOODSON,<sup>1</sup> and his wife Sara  
2 John<sup>2</sup> was born about the year 1632 at Fleur de Hundred or, as it was sometimes called, Piersey's Hundred, a plantation on the south side of James River, in what is now Prince George county, Virginia.

With the exception of his remarkable preservation from the Indians, during the massacre on the 18th of April, 1644, nothing is known of him until 1679 when (as stated in William and Mary College Quarterly, Vol. XI) he is enumerated among the "tithables" at Curles, a plantation on the north side of James River, above Fleur de Hundred.

He was married probably about the year 1654 but the name of his wife has not been handed down to us. He died September, 1684. "On August 20, 1684, he made his will which was proved October 1, 1684. In it he mentions his wife without giving her name, and two sons, John, and Robert 'who hath labored for himself three years.' He mentions also son Robert's two children, Jane and Samuel; and brother Robert's five sons, John, Robert, Richard, Joseph and Benjamin, designating the eldest as cousin John Woodson, meaning nephew, as was the custom then." (Wm. & Mary Qtly., V. XI.)

- II \* 3 Robert<sup>2</sup> was born, according to his own deposition, in the year 1634, at Fleur de Hundred, on the south side of James River, in what is now Prince George county, Virginia, some — miles above Jamestown.

It was here that the family lived at the time of the massacre by the Indians on the 18th of April, 1644, when Robert and his elder brother John were saved by being thrust into a pit made for the purpose of keeping potatoes; from which circumstance their descendants, for several generations bore the sobriquet of "Potato Hole Woodsons."

From this time nothing is definitely known of 3 Robert<sup>2</sup> and his brother 2 John<sup>2</sup> until 1679 when both of them are enumerated among the "tithables" at Curles, a plantation on the north side of James River in Henrico county, a short distance above Fleur de Hundred. This place, later, became noted as the seat of the Randolph family. At an early age, possibly about the year 1656, 3 Robert Woodson<sup>2</sup> married Elizabeth Ferris, daughter of Richard Ferris of Curles. "She was descended from an ancient Norman family, Henri de Ferriers of Gascony. In American Ancestry, vol. VII, is the following statement; 'The Ferris family was originally

from Leicestershire, England, descended from Henri de Ferriers, son of Gwalchelme de Ferriers, Master of Horse to the Duke of Normandy." (Americans of Gentle Birth, vol. I, p. 358.)

"There is a grant of 1785 acres of land October 21, 1687, to Mr. Robert Woodson, Mr. Richard Ferris, Mr. Giles Carter, William Ferris and Roger Comins, at White Oak Swamp, on the north side of James River, in the parish of Varina. 3 Robert Woodson,<sup>2</sup> in 1707, made a deed to his grandsons, 59 William Lewis, Jr.<sup>4</sup> and 60 Joseph Lewis.<sup>4</sup>" (Wm. & Mary Qtly., V. IX, p. 255.) The date of his death is not known, but it was shortly after making this deed, as he was about seventy-three years old at that time. It is not positively known what public service he rendered the colony but living as he did, at a time when every man had to bear his share of the public burden, it is confidently believed that, as a citizen and a member of the colony, he was faithful in the performance of his duty, as his descendants have ever been. In some publications he is frequently spoken of as Colonel Robert Woodson. If he held the military rank of colonel, it was of course by authority of the British government, as the entire colony was under British control at that time.

Issue of

I \*

**2 JOHN WOODSON<sup>2</sup>** (John<sup>1</sup>) and his wife whose name is not known.

**4 John<sup>3</sup>** born about 1655 at Curles, in Henrico county, Virginia, was married about 1677 to Mary Tucker, daughter of Samuel Tucker (Master of the Ship Vine Tree) and his wife, Jane. After the death of Samuel Tucker, his widow, Jane Tucker, married John Pleasants, of Curles, in Henrico county, Virginia. **4 John Woodson<sup>3</sup>** died in 1700. He made his will May 1, 1700, and his widow, Mary Tucker Woodson made her will in 1710. In both wills the names of their four children are mentioned as follows: Joseph, Samuel Tucker, Benjamin and Jane.

II \*

**5 Robert<sup>3</sup>** born about 1657 at Curles, in Henrico county, was married about 1681 but the name of his wife is not known. Two of their children, Jane and Samuel, were living in 1684 and were mentioned by their grandfather **2 John Woodson<sup>2</sup>** in his will dated August 20, 1684. The will also states that **5 Robert<sup>3</sup>** had then been laboring for himself three years; from which statement it is inferred that Robert had married and left the paternal roof about the year 1681 and was then making his own way in the world.

Issue of

I \*

**3 ROBERT WOODSON<sup>2</sup>** (John<sup>1</sup>) and Elizabeth Ferris.

**6 John<sup>3</sup>** This is the "cousin" (nephew) John Woodson mentioned by his uncle, **2 John Woodson<sup>2</sup>** in his will dated August 20, 1684. He was born, probably about 1658, at Curles in Henrico county, was a merchant by occupation and married Judith Tarleton, daughter of Stephen Tarleton of New Kent county. There is a looking-glass which formerly belonged to Charles Van Der Veer Woodson of Prince Edward county, which bears this inscription: "This glass belonged to Stephen Tarleton who was my great-grandfather, and died in the year 1687. I have had the present frame put on it this 14th of December, 1794. Signed, Charles Woodson.<sup>4</sup>"

The council at London had appointed Lord De la War, governor of South Virginia. He arrived at Jamestown in the summer of 1610 with a considerable number of emigrants and a large cargo of supplies, and immediately assumed charge of colonial affairs. The charter was amended from time to time and new governors frequently appointed, as the terms of service were usually of short duration, owing to resignation, death or other causes of removal.

Emigrants were constantly being sent over from the Mother Country until the white population of Virginia had increased to about one thousand souls in 1617. The office of governor had changed hands often; sometimes being occupied by men of no talent for leadership; at other times by men of marked executive ability; and so the condition of the colony brightened or was depressed according to the efficiency or inefficiency of the local administration.

When Governor Dale returned to England in 1618, Sir George Yeardley was appointed to succeed him. The colony at this time numbered nearly two thousand men of high character; many of them being younger sons of the nobility who had come to the new country to make their own fortunes and were not afraid nor ashamed to do the work necessary to accomplish that end. These young gentlemen, owing to the law of primogeniture, lived at home under a very great disadvantage, and could accomplish something for themselves, only by going to some part of the world where that law was not operative in its strictest construction. On the 29th day of January, 1619, the ship George sailed from England and in the following April landed at Jamestown, Virginia. This vessel brought the new governor, Sir George Yeardley and about one hundred passengers; among whom were Dr. John Woodson, of Dorsetshire, and his wife Sara, whom he had married in Devonshire.

Dr. John Woodson came in the capacity of surgeon to a company of soldiers who were sent over for the better protection of the colonists; for the Indians about this time were scowling and seemed disposed to resent further encroachments of the white man.

It was during the administration of Governor Yeardley that the settlements were divided into eleven burroughs, each of which was allowed two representatives. These representatives were called burgesses, and when assembled, constituted the house of burgesses, which, with the governor and council, formed the general assembly or colonial government. This general assembly convened at Jamestown, June 19, 1619, and was the first legislative assembly to perform its functions in Virginia.

Dr. John Woodson who came over in the ship George with Governor Yeardley, was a man of high character and of great value to the young colony. He was born 1586, in Devonshire, England, matriculated at St. John's College, March 1, 1604, at the age of eighteen, as indicated in the chart. (See Introduction.)

Like other young gentlemen of his time, he, no doubt had a desire to see the new country in which the Virginia Company of London had planted their colony a dozen years previously; so at the age of thirty-three he, with his young wife, Sara, embarked on the ship George and landed at Jamestown, April, 1619.

Sometime in 1620 a black looking vessel landed at Jamestown, having on board about twenty negro captives whom the Dutch skipper had kidnapped somewhere on the coast of Africa. These were sold to the colonists as slaves and found to be quite profitable in the cultivation of tobacco which was the staple crop at that time.

Dr. John Woodson, at this time or shortly afterwards, bought six of these Africans who were registered in 1623 as part of his household, and simply as Negars, without giving them any names.

It was also during this year, 1620, that the London Company sent over about one hundred maids, respectable young women possessed of no wealth but of irreproachable character, who desired to seek their fortunes in the new world. These young women were not permitted to remain

a great while in single blessedness. Their hands were eagerly sought in marriage by the young men of the colony. When a young man had wooed and won the maid of his choice, in order that she might become his wife, he was required to pay in tobacco, the price of her passage across the ocean.

The relations between the Indians and the white colonists appeared to be friendly enough, but underneath the placid surface lay a black plot which burst forth in all its horror on the 22nd day of March, 1622.

While the colonists were engaged in their usual vocations, the Indians suddenly fell upon the settlements and killed three hundred and forty-seven men, women and children in an incredibly short space of time. Of course the Indians were made to suffer ample punishment for this outrage. Every man who could handle a gun, took the field and the savages were hunted down and killed without mercy and driven back into the depths of the wilderness. Then ensued a period of respite from Indian depredations.

In the meantime the colonists extended their settlements further into the interior and up both sides of the James River.

Dr. John Woodson located at Fleur de Hundred, or, as it was sometimes called, Piersey's Hundred, some thirty miles above Jamestown on the south side of James River in what is now Prince George county. He and his wife, Sara, and their six negro slaves were registered at Fleur de Hundred in February, 1623. It was, no doubt, at this place that their two sons, John and Robert, were born. Robert was born in 1634 and John probably in 1632.

The governor, Sir George Yeardley, died November 1627 and the council elected Francis West to act as governor in his place until another should be appointed. The King appointed Sir John Harvey to succeed Yeardley. He was no stranger in the colony, had been a member of the council and was very unpopular. He continued in office until 1642 when he was succeeded by Sir William Berkley.

King James I. died March 27, 1625, and was succeeded by his son Charles I. who reinstated Sir George Yeardley as governor of Virginia.

The colonists lived in constant dread of another outbreak on the part of the Indians, for there had never been any real peace nor confidence between the two races since the great massacre of 1622.

Twenty-two years had passed and the fire of revenge was still smouldering in the heart of the bloodthirsty chief, Opechankano, who had matured another scheme for slaughtering the whites.

On the 18th day of April 1644, the Indians made a sudden attack upon the settlements and killed about three hundred of the colonists before they were repulsed.

At this time Dr. John Woodson's two sons, John and Robert, were respectively twelve and ten years of age.

There is a cherished family tradition that, on the day of this second massacre, Dr. John Woodson, while returning from visiting a patient, was killed by the Indians in sight of his home. The Indians then attacked the house which was barred against them and defended by his wife, Sara, and a man named Ligon (a shoemaker) who happened to be there at the moment. The only weapon they had was an old time gun which Ligon handled with deadly effect. At the first fire he killed three Indians, and two at the second shot. In the meantime two Indians essayed to come down through the chimney; but the brave Sara scalded one of them to death with a pot of boiling water which stood on the fire; then seizing the iron roasting spit with both hands, she brained the other Indian, killing him instantly.

The howling mob on the outside took fright and fled; but Ligon fired the third time and killed two more, making nine in all.

At the first alarm, Mrs. Woodson had hidden her two boys, one under a large washtub and the other in a hole where they were accustomed to keep potatoes during the winter, hoping in this way to save them in the event the Indians succeeded in entering the rude log cabin in which they lived.

From this circumstance, for several generations, the descendants of one of these boys were called "Tub Woodsons" and those of the other were designated as "Potato Hole Woodsons."

The old gun which rendered such valuable service on that dreadful 18th day of April, 1644, is still in the possession of the descendants of the late Charles Woodson, of Prince Edward county. Mr. C. W. Venable, late of that county, writing of it says: "The gun is, by exact measurement, seven feet six inches in length, and the bore is so large that I can easily put my whole thumb into it. When first made it was eight feet long, but on account of some injury it was sent to England to be repaired and the gunsmith cut off six inches of the barrell."

As if to commemorate his bravery on this historic occasion, the name of Ligon was rudely carved upon the stock. The gun is now (1915) in the possession of Mr. Wm. V. Wilson, a prominent lawyer of Lynchburg, Virginia.

✓ After this second massacre, the war with the Indians continued about two years, when their power was completely broken, and in 1646 a treaty was made by which they relinquished the land of their fathers and retired further into the wilderness. At this time the colony was in a very flourishing condition; commerce was largely increased; more than thirty ships were engaged in the carrying trade, and the population in 1648 had increased to twenty thousand. (See U. S. History.)

Many inquiries have been made as to whatever became of Mrs. Sara Woodson, one of the heroines of April 18, 1644; but nothing is known of her since that time. It is but reasonable to suppose that she lived long enough to bring up her two boys in the paths of rectitude and to instill into them the principles of righteousness and the spirit of loyalty and patriotism for which their descendants have been distinguished.

Dr. John Woodson and his wife Sara sailed from England Jan. 29, 1619 landed at Jamestown, Va. April 1619 lived 30 miles from Jamestown at Fleur de Hundred on southside of James River in what is now Prince George County, Va.

Two sons - John born 1632  
Robert born 1634

Robert Woodson born 1634

Benjamin Woodson  
b. 1666 at Curles in Henrico Co. Va.

John Woodson  
b. 1696 Henrico Co. Va.

John Woodson (Poplar Foot) nickname because of large feet  
b. 1747 Cumberland Co. Va.

Joseph Nathaniel Woodson  
b. 1774 Cumberland Co. Va.  
d. 1852 in Montgomery Co. Tennessee

Jacob Canifax Woodson  
b. March 12, 1810 Va. or N.C.

Thomas Sherwin Woodson  
b. April 13, 1841 in Va.  
d. May 11, 1924  
married Dec. 22, 1864

Sherwin Hervey Woodson  
b. Oct 21, 1867  
d. July 1949

April 23, 1988

Dear Larry,

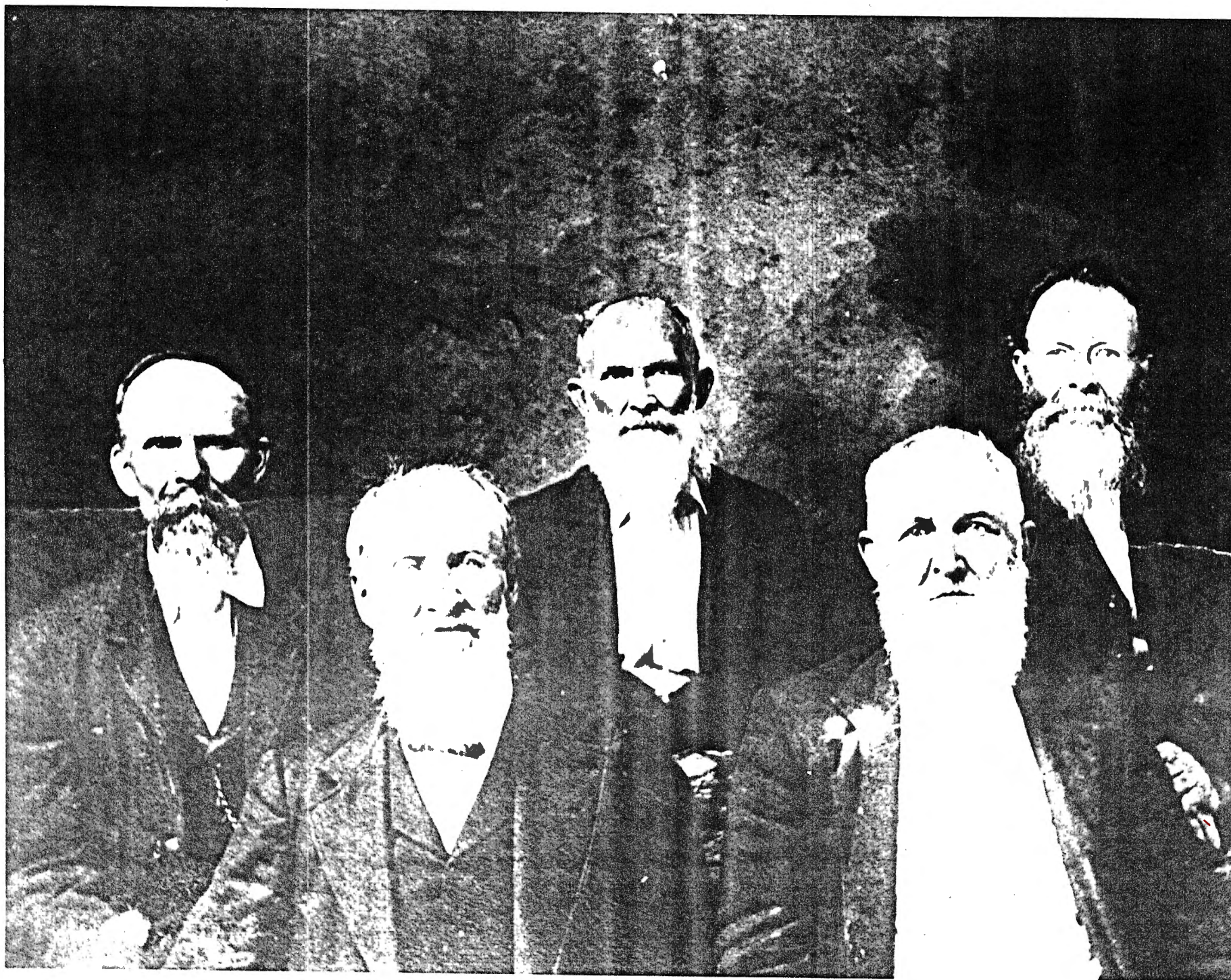
I finally got copies made of the Woodson family history. Johnny made a copy out of the Woodson Genealogy book in the Atlanta library while he was a student at Georgia Tech. It is the same book that Granddaddy's brother Ed had a copy of that was written by a "Woodson" that lived in Memphis about 1920. It had record of all the Woodsons in the U.S. at that time that he could locate including Granddaddy and all his children (our parents) and that is where we got the names on the white sheet that go back each generation to the plantation at Jamestown. As I told you John has seen the remains of the foundation of the cabin that was John and Sarah Woodson's according to the professor at William & Mary College at Williamsburg that had been doing excavating and digging at the plantation a few years ago. We have a great heritage.

I am still working for the man who bought my business helping to reduce inventory while he decides just what he is going to do with stock and the building but I don't think I'll be here over 3 or 4 more weeks at the most but am not certain.

Thanks again for the pictures - Come to see us this summer -

Lile





Woodson Family